

Today we remember and honor the past service of America's veterans. And today we renew our commitment to meet the challenges of America's future for which they gave so much. Almost two centuries ago, Daniel Webster said in his dedication of the monument at Bunker Hill, "There remains to us a great duty of defense and preservation. And there is open to us, also, a noble pursuit to which the spirit of the times strongly invites us."

My fellow Americans, on the brink of a new century, we stand before broad new vistas of hope and progress. But if we are to realize our hopes for that future, we must ensure that America remains the world's strongest force for peace and freedom, for security and prosperity. We must strengthen and expand the alliances that have brought us thus far. We must continue to reduce the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. We must confront the violent conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds that so bedevil the world today. We must stop the global scourges of organized crime, drug trafficking, and especially terrorism. We must build an open trading system for the 21st century, and we must stand with all those who stand for democracy and universal human rights.

I cannot help but note on this day that in our time, for the first time in the entire history of humanity on this planet, more than half the world's people live in democratically elected governments because of the example and the force and the power of the ideas of America and the sacrifice of America's veterans.

Let me also say that, as we meet the challenges of the next century, our unity as a people will be, as it has ever been, our greatest strength. The silent white rows of crosses that surround us mark the final resting place of men and women of all services, all ranks, all races, all religions. They stand as stunning evidence that our Founders were right: We are all equal in the eyes of God. That is something we must continue to practice until we get it right. It is something we must teach our children, and it is something we must continue to teach to those troubled areas of the rest of the world where people still insist on killing over their differences.

Our American veterans buried here came from different walks of life. They served our Nation in different places and in different ways. Yet all were united by love of country, belief in freedom and opportunity and responsibility, and their faith in America's future. As we commemorate this day of reverence and respect, let us also remember this unity of spirit that has guided our Nation forward from its beginnings. No words can repay the debt of gratitude we owe to the men and women who have stood up for our freedom, but we can honor the memory of our veterans best by remaining the best kind of Americans we can be and keeping our Nation strong and secure, one Nation under God, to fulfill the vision of a better world that so many of them, our veterans, gave so much to create.

Thank you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in Arlington, VA. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Zweiman, national commander, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, and Maj. Gen. Robert F. Foley, USA, Commanding General, U.S. Army Military District of Washington.

Proclamation 6953—National Family Caregivers Week, 1996

November 11, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

At this special time each year, we give thanks for our many blessings. Among those blessings are the quiet but heartfelt contributions made on a daily basis by our Nation's caregivers, particularly on behalf of the elderly in our society.

The true value of the role that caregivers play in the lives of America's families is immeasurable. Providing physical comfort and emotional reassurance, these strong and selfless people care for loved ones who can no longer care for themselves. The vast majority of caregivers are family members—often older relatives—and women provide most of the informal care that their families receive. Of the millions of people who provide informal care to older adults, over half are spouses

or children. While many caregivers experience stress and frustration in fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities, and many sacrifice personal opportunities to care for a loved one, most regard the challenges of caregiving as a rewarding and satisfying experience.

By the year 2030, one in five Americans will be at least 65 years old, compared to one in eight today. In addition, the number of older Americans will double, from the present 34 million to about 69 million. At the same time that our population is aging, more older persons are suffering from chronic illnesses and face potentially disabling conditions. Moreover, individuals with lifelong disabilities are living longer and may require assistance in caring for themselves as they age. The overwhelming majority of older Americans would prefer to remain in their homes while growing older—even when no coordinated system of home- and community-based care is available. As a result, more Americans are becoming involved in caring for family members who want to age with dignity and respect.

This week, as we celebrate the contributions of caregivers to their families and communities, let us recognize the challenges these generous individuals must confront on a daily basis—challenges that include fulfilling multiple and often conflicting roles of caregiving for their aging relatives, caring for young children, and working outside their homes. Let us promote community programs and encourage workplace policies that help to lighten or share the burden of their caregiving responsibilities. And let us, as a Nation, recognize and commend the vital role they play in ensuring that older Americans age with grace, dignity, and a precious measure of independence.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 24 through November 30, 1996, as National Family Caregivers Week. I call upon Government officials, businesses, communities, volunteers, educators, and all the people of the United States to acknowledge the contribu-

tions made by caregivers this week and throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

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Proclamation 6954—Thanksgiving Day, 1996

November 11, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's oldest tradition, Thanksgiving is also a reaffirmation of our most deeply held values; a public recognition that, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "God who gave us life gave us liberty." In gratitude for God's gift of freedom and "for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us," George Washington made Thanksgiving his first proclamation for the new Nation, and it is one we are privileged to renew each year.

Much has changed for America in the two centuries since that first Thanksgiving proclamation. Generations of hardworking men and women have cultivated our soil and worked the land, and today America's bounty helps feed the world. The promise of freedom that sustained our founders through the hardships of the Revolution and the first challenging days of nationhood has become a reality for millions of immigrants who left their homelands for a new life on these shores. And the light of that freedom now shines brightly in many nations that once lived in the shadows of tyranny and oppression.

But across the years, we still share an unbroken bond with the men and women who first proclaimed Thanksgiving in our land.